



# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

A Strategy for Citizen Involvement



Delaware Valley  
Regional Planning  
Commission



2008





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Created in 1965, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is an interstate, intercounty and intercity agency that provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning to shape a vision for the future growth of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties, as well as the City of Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer counties in New Jersey.

DVRPC provides technical assistance and services; conducts high priority studies that respond to the requests and demands of member state and local governments; fosters cooperation among various constituents to forge a consensus on diverse regional issues; determines and meets the needs of the private sector; and practices public outreach efforts to promote two-way communication and public awareness of regional issues and the Commission.



The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's logo has been adapted from the official DVRPC seal, and is designed as a stylized image of the Delaware Valley. The overall shape symbolizes the region as a whole, while the diagonal bar signifies the Delaware River. The two adjoining crescents represent the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey.

DVRPC is funded by a variety of funding sources including federal grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Pennsylvania and New Jersey departments of transportation, as well as by DVRPC's state and local member governments.

DVRPC fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. DVRPC's website may be translated into Spanish, Russian, and Traditional Chinese online by visiting [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org). Publications and other public documents can be made available in alternative languages or formats, if requested. For more information, please call 215.238.2871.

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# INTRODUCTION

DVRPC • MPO • FUTURE VISION • COMMITTEE MANAGEMENT

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has a long history of public participation and citizen involvement in regional and transportation planning initiatives. Throughout DVRPC's history, the basic tenet of public participation has always remained the same: to reach out to and engage as many citizens as possible in the decision-making process. Through a constructive dialogue, decision-makers, planners and the public can share their opinions and mutually shape a vision for a community, county or region. In order to implement any plan, there needs to be cooperative and coordinated action among the public, private and non-profit sectors and the general public. Building coalitions is a DVRPC mandate, and our organization works with a variety of stakeholders throughout the region, from elected officials to business owners, local civic organizations and the general public.

DVRPC's *Public Participation Plan* is designed as a resource for DVRPC's Board, staff, and the general public to better understand the Commission's overall public participation strategy and procedures, as well as the federal mandates that inform DVRPC's public

participation efforts. This is the third iteration of a formal plan, with previous editions issued in 2001 and 2004.

This edition of the *Public Participation Plan* includes updates as per new federal SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users) guidelines, as well as an expanded Title VI and environmental justice (EJ) section, which incorporates DVRPC's previously released *Environmental Justice Protocol*. DVRPC firmly believes that Title VI and EJ statutes are inherent to all work completed by the Commission and should be incorporated into all aspects of DVRPC's work and public participation activities. The *Public Participation Plan*, DVRPC's *Title VI Compliance Plan*, and *Environmental Justice at DVRPC* (which replaces the "... And Justice for All" Annual Update) work concurrently to integrate federal mandates for Title VI and EJ throughout DVRPC's Work Program. *Environmental Justice at DVRPC*, which is updated every fiscal year, includes data collection that directs the Commission's public participation efforts, as well as descriptions of projects and programs that utilize DVRPC's EJ methodology.

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## What is DVRPC?

DVRPC was created in 1965 by interstate compact between Pennsylvania and New Jersey, whose legislatures worked together to define the Commission's structure, authority, purpose, and administrative procedures. DVRPC was subsequently designated as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the nine-county Delaware Valley region.

The region encompasses the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania/Chester, Pennsylvania/ Camden, New Jersey/Trenton, New Jersey metropolitan area and includes nine counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer in New Jersey. These counties are comprised of 353 individual cities, boroughs or townships within a 3,833 square mile planning area.

DVRPC's mission is to proactively shape a comprehensive vision for the region's future growth. We do so by developing regional plans and priorities; providing technical assistance and services; conducting high priority studies that respond to the requests and demands of member states and local governments; fostering cooperation among various constituencies to forge a consensus on diverse regional issues; determining and meeting the needs of the private sector; and continuing public outreach efforts that promote two-way communication and enhance public awareness of regional issues and DVRPC.

#### Key DVRPC initiatives include:

- Long-range regional planning with a 20-year horizon;
- The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) -- a priority list of highway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and freight improvements that will be funded in the coming years;
- Transportation project and corridor plans;
- Community and neighborhood planning;
- Local land use planning initiatives;
- Regional and local open space conservation planning;
- Expanding access to jobs and other economic development plans;
- Municipal outreach and assistance; and
- Geographic Information System (GIS), aerial images and data gathering.

DVRPC is governed by an eighteen-member decision-making board composed of state, county, and city representatives from the region's member governments, as well as various participating non-voting members and federal agency observers. All DVRPC Board meetings are open to the public to attend, and include an opportunity for public comment.

DVRPC staff is comprised of transportation planners and engineers, city and environmental planners, technology and mapping specialists, and other professionals that provide technical assistance and services on a wide variety of issues facing the region.

## What is an MPO?

A metropolitan planning organization (MPO) is a regional organization responsible for comprehensive transportation planning and programming for urbanized areas. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 created the requirement for urban transportation planning largely in response to the construction of the Interstate Highway System and the planning of routes through and around urban areas. The Act required that transportation projects in urbanized areas with population of 50,000 or more be based on a continuing, comprehensive, urban transportation planning process undertaken cooperatively by the states and local governments.

Beyond the initial mandate of highway and road construction, transportation planning undertaken by MPOs can include transit, inter-modal and pedestrian/bicycle planning, and continue to serve as a cooperative effort among state agencies and local governments to effectively fulfill a variety of regional planning responsibilities.

## A Vision For The Future

As the MPO for the Delaware Valley region, DVRPC undertakes two significant, ongoing

planning processes: the development and adoption of a Long-Range Plan, and the management and adoption of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

### *Long-Range Planning: Destination 2030: The Year 2030 Plan for the Delaware Valley*

*Destination 2030: The Year 2030 Plan for the Delaware Valley* is DVRPC's sixth regional Long-Range Plan. Since its creation in 1965, DVRPC has prepared and adopted plans with horizon years of 1985, 2000, 2010, 2020, 2025 and 2030. As the region's MPO, DVRPC has a mandated responsibility to develop a regional plan with a 20-year time frame, with long-range forecasts of population, land use, employment and travel trends that determine how federal transportation funds will be spent. *Destination 2030* sets the framework and priorities for distribution of federal funds and ensures that recommended projects are consistent with defined long-term goals for the transportation system. *Destination 2030* was adopted in June, 2005, and was developed through an extensive public outreach effort, technical research and coordination among other agencies.

*Destination 2030* provides a vision of the region's future growth and development over the next twenty-five years; determines regional plan consistency in order to locate and implement future transportation facilities and services; provides guidance and direction for municipal, county, and state agencies to make infrastructure and conservation protection investments; and serves as the foundation for developing the region's TIP.

### *Connections – The Regional Plan for a Sustainable Future*

Work is currently underway on the Year 2035 update to the DVRPC Long-Range Plan for the greater Philadelphia region, entitled *Connections – The Regional Plan for a Sustainable Future*. *Connections* will focus on strengthening the linkages between land use,



the environment, economic development, and the transportation system. Recent long-range planning policies have emphasized sustainable growth, redeveloping existing regional centers, and funding transportation projects which support the plan's goals. Additionally, *Connections* will address new focus areas such as climate change and energy needs.

### *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is an agreed-upon list of priority projects. The TIP lists all projects for which federal funds are anticipated, along with non-federally funded projects that are regionally significant.

This program enables the DVRPC Board to select and prioritize the many transportation-related projects proposed for the region, while maximizing the allocation and use of available federal dollars. The list is multi-modal; in addition to the more traditional highway and public transit projects, it includes bicycle, pedestrian and freight-related projects as well. The TIP not only lists the specific projects, but also documents the anticipated schedule and cost for each project phase. Inclusion of a project phase in the TIP means that it is seriously expected to be implemented during the

TIP time period. The TIP is financially constrained to the amount of funds that are expected to be available. DVRPC has adopted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), one for Pennsylvania, one for New Jersey, which define the procedures for making amendments and modifications to the TIP. Such agreements between the states, transit operators, and DVRPC define major and minor amendments and the degree of public review required for each type of action. The MOUs are included with each TIP document.

In Pennsylvania, the TIP covers a four-year period and is updated every other year. The New Jersey TIP also covers a four-year period and is updated annually.

To help establish priorities for the TIP, DVRPC solicits the public's opinion. A public comment period of at least thirty (30) days and public meetings give the public an opportunity to post and pose questions about the TIP process and the projects.

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### DVRPC Committee Management

Prior to review and action by DVRPC's Board, all regional plans, TIPs, and major actions are subject to review and comment by the following standing committees: Regional Citizens Committee (RCC), Regional Transportation Committee (RTC) and Planning Coordinating Committee (PCC); with review, as appropriate, by the Regional Aviation Committee, Regional Air Quality Committee, Tri-

County Water Quality Management Board, and other such committees as the Board establishes. Such action by these committees follows the public participation programs conducted by municipalities and counties prior to forwarding recommendations to DVRPC for regional public outreach.

While only the RCC is open to the general public for membership, anyone who wishes may attend any of the following committee meetings: RTC and PCC, Regional Aviation Committee, Information Resources Exchange Group, Goods Movement Task Force, Tri-County Water Quality Management Board, Land Use and Housing Committee, TransitChek Policy Committee, Board Policy Analysis Committee, and ITS Coordinating Council.

When the Board creates new committees, it shall designate whether they will be open to the public. All of these committees may receive public input from the Commission's various constituencies.

Public notification of all meetings of DVRPC's Board-established committees is provided at least ten (10) days prior to each meeting. The public notification includes a copy of a draft agenda and/or a notice that includes the date, time, and location of the meeting. This notification can also be issued to pertinent members of the news media, if applicable. Changes to the agenda may be made up to the day of the meeting; however, no major action items should be added within three (3) days of the meeting. Meeting dates and agendas are available at [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org).



## *Regional Citizens Committee*

DVRPC's primary forum for continuous public involvement is the Regional Citizens Committee (RCC). This advisory arm of DVRPC has been established to provide direct, ongoing access to the regional planning and decision-making process. The RCC meets monthly to review and comment on DVRPC policies and plans. This open avenue of communication gives us the chance to hear the public's voice, ideas, and concerns on major decisions that affects the way Delaware Valley residents live, work, and travel.

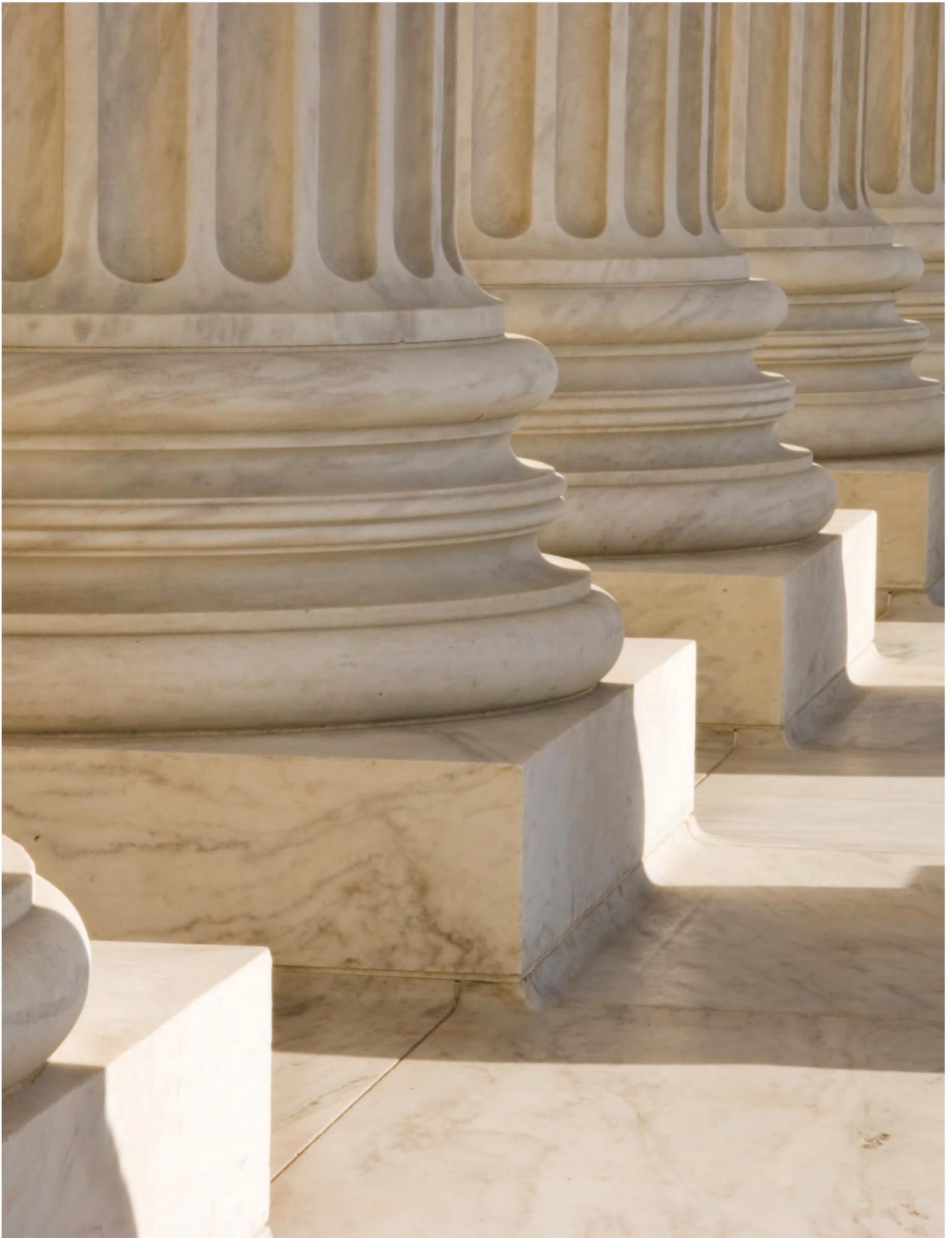
The RCC includes individuals and representatives of various organizations that are concerned with land use and/or transportation issues in the region. Voting members must attend at least three (3) consecutive RCC meetings, or have attended at least four (4) meetings in the past twelve (12) months. Corresponding members do not attend regular meetings, but remain on the mailing list.

The RCC may also establish subcommittees and task forces as needed to study particular issues such as transportation, land use, the environment, legislation, and sustainability.

Committee membership is open to anyone who wishes to join. To maintain balance, no more than one representative of any organization or company is permitted to cast votes. Members of the RCC prior to 1990 are "grandfathered" and may continue to vote, regardless of organizational "quota."

For more information, please contact the Office of Communications and Public Affairs at 215-238-2871.





# THE MANDATES

SAFETEA-LU • TITLE VI • E.O. 12898 • E.O. 13166 • ADA • CAAA

Several federal and state mandates guide DVRPC's overall public participation efforts. Together, these laws establish a foundation for involving the public and ensuring that every project undertaken by the Commission considers the human environment.

## SAFETEA-LU

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed in 2005, and authorizes the federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period (2005-2009).

The bill provides \$286.4 billion in guaranteed funding for federal surface transportation programs. SAFETEA-LU carries on and extends the stronger planning and implementation efforts first enacted in the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and extended with the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

DVRPC, as the MPO for the Delaware Valley region, plays an important role in the overall implementation of SAFETEA-LU. This federal law mandates that DVRPC prepare and maintain a Long-Range Plan with a minimum 20-year planning horizon and emphasizes transportation planning in conjunction with state and local officials and transit operators. DVRPC will be responsible for interacting with all stakeholders and interested parties to ensure the best possible linkage between transportation and transit improvements, economic development, land use, and environmental considerations.

Public participation in the transportation planning process is also a key facet of SAFETEA-LU, and requires early and continued public access to information and the decision-making process. MPO's are required to enact public participation plans that provide for the following:

- Adequate public notice of public participation activities and comment periods at key decision points;
- Timely notice of and reasonable access to transportation information;
- Employment of visualization techniques illustrating the Long-Range Plan, the TIP, and other MPO work program projects;
- Electronically available information (e.g., via the internet);
- Public meetings held at convenient and accessible times and locations;
- Explicit consideration of public input received during the development of the Long-Range Plan and the TIP;
- Solicitation and consideration of the needs of those traditionally underserved by transportation;
- Additional public comment opportunities if the final Long-Range Plan or the TIP differs significantly from the draft version reviewed by the public;
- Coordination with statewide public participation activities;
- Periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of the public participation plan; and
- A summary of comments received and the disposition of those comments; and consultation with federal, state, county and local planning agencies impacting or affected by the transportation planning process.

SAFETEA-LU also requires the participation of interested parties in the development of any public participation plan. For further information, see “Development of the Public Participation Plan.”

## Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that “no person in the United States, shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

DVRPC, as the MPO for the Delaware Valley region, serves as the primary forum where state departments of transportation, transit providers, local agencies and the public work together to develop local transportation plans and programs that address the region’s needs. To meet the requirements of these laws, the Commission must:

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- Enhance its analytical capabilities to ensure that the Long-Range Plan and the TIP comply with Title VI;
- Identify residential, employment and transportation patterns of low-income and minority populations so that their needs may be identified and addressed, and the benefits and burdens of transportation can be fairly distributed; and
- Evaluate and, where necessary, improve the public involvement process to eliminate barriers and engage minority, disabled, elderly, and low-income populations in regional decision-making.

In January 2007, the DVRPC Board approved the Commission’s *Title VI Compliance Plan*, which establishes a framework for DVRPC’s efforts to ensure compliance with Title VI as well as with other EJ and non-discrimination mandates. The



Plan outlines how Title VI and EJ considerations are reflected in the Commission’s Work Program, publications, communications, public involvement effort, and general way of doing business. The *Title VI Compliance Plan* is available by contacting 215-238-2871 or in the Public Affairs section of DVRPC’s website, [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org).

### *Title VI Statements*

DVRPC has developed two Title VI Statements to include on public documents produced by the Commission to inform the public of its compliance with Title VI in providing alternative languages and formats for its documents

The first statement is added to any meeting announcement to which the public and/or outside agencies or organizations may attend (such as public

meetings and open houses both on-site and off-site, seminars, as well as DVRPC committee meetings):

*DVRPC fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. DVRPC public meetings are always held in ADA-accessible facilities and in transit-accessible locations when possible. Auxiliary services can be provided to individuals who submit a request at least seven days prior to a meeting. For more information, please call (215) 238-2871.*

The second statement below is added to all DVRPC public documents (such as meeting minutes) and publications. For publications, the statement can be added at the bottom of the DVRPC page.

*DVRPC fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. DVRPC's website may be translated into Spanish, Russian, and Traditional Chinese online by visiting [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org). Publications and other public documents can be made available in alternative languages or formats, if requested. For more information, please call (215) 238-2871.*

## Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations

Environmental justice (EJ) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, income or education level in the planning and decision-making process. EJ programs promote the protection of human health and the environment, empowerment via public participation, and the dissemination of relevant information to inform and educate affected communities. EJ policy was formalized with the signing of *Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, which mandates that federal agencies make achieving environmental justice a part of their mission.

### EJ encompasses three basic fundamental principles:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, of programs, policies and activities on minority populations, and low-income populations;
- To ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and
- To prevent the denial of, reduction of, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

### EJ requires the MPOs to:

- Examine the allocation of benefits and burdens, currently and in the planned future;
- Ensure that minority and low-income communities are treated equitably in the provision of transportation services and projects; and
- Provide an ample opportunity for full participation for minority and low-income communities to advise the MPO during its planning and decision-making process.

### *The Importance of Environmental Justice In The Public Participation Process*

Effective public involvement in the planning process and project development process can alert state and local agencies about EJ concerns so that they do not result in surprises during the project-development stage. Continuous interaction between community members and transportation professionals is critical to successfully identify and address potential EJ concerns.

State, regional and local agencies should all have public involvement procedures established that

provide consideration for EJ. These procedures should provide an inclusive, representative and equal opportunity for two-way communication resulting in the appropriate action that reflects this public involvement. EJ should be considered in all aspects of planning and project decision-making, including the design of both the public participation plan and in the proposed project.

## Executive Order 13166: Improving Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), was issued in 2000 to improve access to federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities for persons who, as a result of national origin, are limited in their English proficiency. It requires federal agencies to ensure that recipients of federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries.

For more information, please see Appendix 4: DVRPC Policy for Engaging Individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in the DVRPC Title VI Compliance Plan.

## Americans With Disabilities Act

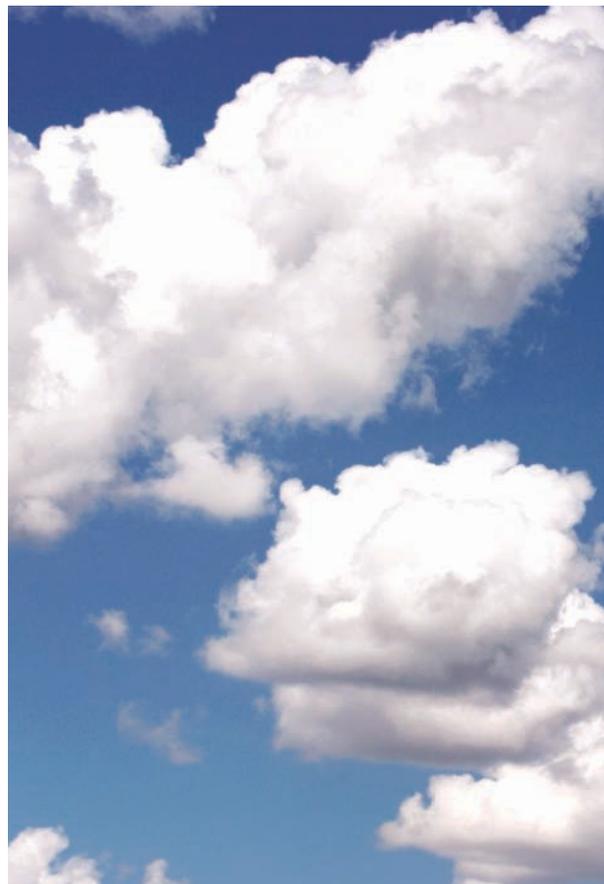
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 provides “no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by a department, agency, special purpose district or other instrumentality of the state or local government.”

For more information, please see Appendix 5: DVRPC Policy for Meeting ADA Requirements in the DVRPC *Title VI Compliance Plan*.

## Doing Our Share For Cleaner Air

The Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) were signed into law in 1990, setting up an aggressive timetable and program to improve the nation’s air quality.

The 1990 law placed greater emphasis on mobile sources of emissions, and required the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to invoke established penalties if states failed to submit adequate plans to attain standards. The Delaware Valley region has been designated a non-attainment area for both the 8-hour ozone and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The region has until 2010 to meet, or “attain” the standards for both ozone and PM<sub>2.5</sub>. DVRPC’s *Destination 2030* and the TIP are designed to help the region achieve this important target.



# DVRPC'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION • PHILOSOPHY • GOALS • OBJECTIVES • ACTIVITIES

DVRPC believes that planning must be done with the public's advice and consent. Decisions made at the Commission affect the future of all those who live and work in the Delaware Valley region, and DVRPC is committed to understanding the diverse needs and concerns of the public, non-profit organizations, business interests, and local governments.

We hear the voices of our citizens through public participation. Citizen comment comes from a variety of sources, including community and non-profit organizations, public officials, disabled individuals, mature citizens, and those that have been traditionally underserved. Public comments are reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate agency, and are also provided to the various DVRPC advisory committees including the Regional Transportation Committee and the Regional Citizens Committee for consideration before final action by the Board. Yet this effort does not encompass all that we must do to reach our different audiences. We, therefore, have outlined the strategy below that summarizes our philosophy and intent to place public participation at the forefront of our priorities.

## What is Public Participation?

Public participation is the process by which interested and affected individuals, organizations, agencies and government entities are consulted and included in the decision-making process.

Public participation consists of three related, and often overlapping, processes: information dissemination, consultation, and stakeholder participation. Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, or institutions that have an interest or



stake in the outcome of a DVRPC funded project. The term also applies to those potentially affected by a project.

Information dissemination refers to the availability and distribution of timely and relevant information on DVRPC programs and projects. Aspects of dissemination include appropriate notification and disclosure of project information and proper public access to it.

Consultation pertains to information exchanges among the implementing agency, project executing agencies, and stakeholders. Consultation also provides opportunities for communities and local groups to contribute to project scope, implementation, and evaluation.

Developing strategies for incorporating stakeholder participation throughout any program or project cycle is particularly necessary in projects that impact the incomes, livelihoods or lifestyles of local groups, especially disadvantaged populations at risk in and around project sites.



## Our Philosophy

DVRPC believes that effective public involvement and participation is a dynamic and ongoing process that is essential to meeting the future transportation and land use needs of all citizens in the Delaware Valley. Through a constructive dialogue, decision-makers, planners, and the public can share opinions and mutually shape a vision for a neighborhood, county or region. In order to implement any plan, there needs to be a cooperative and coordinated action among the public, private and non-profit sectors and the general public.

Effective planning cannot be achieved without the consideration, cooperation and consent of citizens throughout the region. The Commission commits to promote and sustain a responsive public participation program that supports citizen input and timely response at all levels of planning.

Every DVRPC staff member is involved in some way in public participation. Even if they do not have direct contact with citizens, their actions ultimately have an impact on how our region functions and on how DVRPC is perceived by the public. The following public participation guidelines were developed to assist DVRPC employees and Board members in achieving the objectives of DVRPC's Public Participation Plan.

## Public Participation Goals

### **DVRPC's public participation goals are to:**

- Provide opportunity for interested parties to identify regional concerns and priorities;
- Encourage public participation opportunities in a wide and varied audience, including traditionally underserved groups;
- Publicize public participation opportunities and activities throughout the development of DVRPC projects and programs;
- Obtain meaningful public input and participation to inform the Commission's planning and decision-making process; and
- Inform and educate stakeholders and interested parties, share information, and increase the overall awareness of regional planning, land use and transportation issues and activities in the Delaware Valley region.

## Public Participation Objectives

In order to ensure that DVRPC has a proactive and meaningful public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full citizen input to key decision-making processes, and supports early and continuing involvement in developing regional plans and projects, the Commission pursues the following objectives:

- The dissemination of information will be thorough to ensure the education of the public and to promote the broadest understanding of the region's needs, as a means of strengthening regional policy-making;
- DVRPC's constituency will be broadened by increasing public and private sector and inter-governmental communications, and by reaching out to those who are underserved in this region;
- The interested public will be ensured of ample opportunity to participate in the decision-making process for regional projects and plans, as well as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); and
- DVRPC will coordinate its Public Participation strategy with ongoing public involvement processes of its member governments, whenever possible, to enhance public participation.

## Development of the Public Participation Plan

Federal SAFETEA-LU guidelines require the participation of interested parties in the development of public participation plans. SAFETEA-LU defines “interested parties” as:

- Citizens;
- Affected public agencies;
- Representatives of public transportation employees;
- Freight shippers;
- Private providers of transportation;
- Representatives of users of public transportation;
- Safety and security providers;
- Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities;
- Representatives of the disabled;
- Providers of freight transportation services; and
- Other interested parties.

DVRPC staff consulted with a range of stakeholders and conducted a public review process to develop this Public Participation Plan.

## Evaluation of Public Participation Activities

DVRPC, in conjunction with other interested parties, evaluates the effectiveness of its public participation program as needed following major planning efforts, and, at a minimum, at the end of each fiscal year.





# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES

ENGAGING • PROMOTING INVOLVEMENT

## Engaging Our Citizens

To ensure a rich and diverse public participation process, interested parties must be informed and educated on regional issues, projects underway, and projects planned. The following strategies are utilized by DVRPC to ensure that interested parties receive timely information in a variety of formats:

### *Website*

DVRPC's extensive website, [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org), is a continuously updated source for information on nearly every aspect of the regional and transportation planning process. A wide scope of resource material, covering all of DVRPC's planning areas is available, as well as an event calendar, meeting notices and agendas, information on public involvement, staff contact information and links to related agencies and municipalities.

The DVRPC website is also now accessible to non-English speaking visitors who wish to translate online documents into Spanish, Russian, and Traditional Chinese. These languages were chosen as a result of a demographic study of the 2000 Census

conducted by DVRPC. Information regarding planning and transportation issues in the region and public involvement and outreach (including the Regional Citizens Committee and other public meetings) is available for translation on the DVRPC website.

### *Resource Center and Library*

The DVRPC Resource Center, located in DVRPC's office in Philadelphia, is a clearinghouse for planning and transportation-related information, as well as regional and demographic data. The Resource Center also has copies of all DVRPC-generated studies and publications available for public use.

The Resource Center is open during regular business hours. Alternately, one may contact our resource librarian by phone at 215-238-2817 or e-mail ([egallagher@dvrpc.org](mailto:egallagher@dvrpc.org)) to make an appointment. The research librarian can assist with a specific research question or to obtain a print copy of a DVRPC publication. The use of the library is free; some fees may pertain to purchasing some publications or photocopies of documents.

### *Publications*

DVRPC publishes a variety of newsletters, studies, and assorted transportation, data and planning related documents throughout the year, both online at our website, [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org) and in print, available through our Resource Center.

DVRPC can translate Commission documents into any language or format, if requested. For more information, see Appendix 4: DVRPC Policy for Engaging Individuals with Limited English



Proficiency (LEP) in the *DVRPC Title VI Compliance Plan*.

The Commission also provides an annual report that summarizes the activities of the agency for the prior fiscal year and encompasses environmental, transportation, regional planning and public outreach issues.

Special brochures such as *A Citizen's Guide to the Regional Planning Process* and *The TIP Handbook: A Guide For Municipal Officials and Citizens* are available. To receive a copy of these publications, please contact the Office of Communications and Public Affairs at 215-238-2871.

### Newsletters

*DVRPC News* is the Commission's newsletter and is published at least three (3) times per year. The newsletter provides information about the Commission's projects, programs and actions, and information on how to reach the Commission and its staff. The newsletter is mailed to all individuals and organizations on DVRPC's mailing list, as well as posted online at [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org) in PDF format. To receive this newsletter by mail or e-mail, please call 215-238-2871.

*New at DVRPC* is an eNewsletter produced by the Office of Information Technology to highlight recent additions to the DVRPC website. This eNewsletter is published eight (8) times per year and is available on the DVRPC website.

The newly launched FOCUS eNewsletter is packed with news and events for local governments within the DVRPC region. This newsletter gives us a chance to FOCUS on news that you can use to manage your borough, township or city, and perhaps keep you informed and connected to issues and events across the region. To be added to the



FOCUS eNewsletter email list, please contact [elinkous@dvrpc.org](mailto:elinkous@dvrpc.org).

### Media Communications

DVRPC regularly releases, as deemed appropriate, press advisories to the region's 350-plus electronic and print media outlets. In addition to DVRPC programs and activities, media releases are provided for upcoming events and actions.

### Speakers Bureau

DVRPC maintains a Speakers Bureau to promote presentations to organizations and municipalities. DVRPC's staff, which is composed of professionals in a variety of planning and transportation specialities, is available to speak at your organization's meeting on a variety of topics, including bicycle and transit planning, environmental planning, and long-range planning for the region. For more information, please contact DVRPC's Office of Communications and Public Affairs at 215-238-2871.

### Planner's Methodology

DVRPC has developed a *Planner's Methodology*, which is designed to provide guidance to staff in meeting Title VI and EJ mandates and structuring a public participation plan at the project or study level.



How meaningful public participation is gathered and implemented into a planning process may differ widely, depending on the type and scope of a project. The *Planner's Methodology* sets a framework for developing individual public participation plans for specific projects, offers a “tool kit” of public participation strategies to meet the goals for public participation cited in this Public Participation Plan, and builds upon DVRPC's philosophy and intent to place public participation at the forefront of the Commission's priorities.

### *Notification of Meetings and Events*

The scheduled meeting dates of the DVRPC Board are published annually in newspapers of general circulation in both New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Notice of additional meetings will be sent to newspapers of general circulation in both states at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. All DVRPC sponsored meetings are also posted on an events calendar at [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org).

DVRPC Board meetings will include a time for public comments concerning agenda and non-agenda items during the consideration of business; however, the Board Chair may limit the length of comments or provide other options for public comments as he or she deems fit.

Public meetings will be held prior to the adoption of DVRPC's Long-Range Plan, TIP and other

major amendments. Authorization to proceed with public distribution of pertinent materials and to hold public meetings must be sought from DVRPC's Board.

Notification via legal advertisements in newspapers of general circulation as well as minority and alternative language newspapers is required for DVRPC Long-Range Plan public meetings, adoption and amendment, as well as for TIP public meetings and adoption.

The initial public meeting or activity used to kick off a major public involvement effort or project, plan or the TIP will be announced broadly to the news media, as well as to state, county and municipalities involved most directly by the event. Announcement should be early enough in the process to allow public input on initial decisions such as project definition and goals.

Advance notice will depend upon the project and its timeline, but a minimum of fifteen (15) days notice should be given for public involvement and participation events. As much notice as possible should be given to community and special interest organizations. Mailing and e-mail lists will be updated regularly to ensure proper notification to as many audiences as possible.

### *Public Meetings and Other Events*

Public meetings, open houses, workshops, charrettes, and information sessions will be scheduled, when deemed appropriate, to allow the greatest opportunity for attendance by the general public and interested groups (i.e., evening or lunch meetings) based upon available staff and resources.

Meetings will be conducted in locations that are always ADA accessible and convenient to public transit, when possible. Sign language interpreters or other auxiliary aid requests can be accommodated if requested in advance.

Draft documents for public review will be placed in regional libraries, DVRPC's Resource Center, and other community locations as determined by staff. DVRPC's website, [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org), contains draft documents for review, as well as other pertinent public notices and information.

There are a variety of public participation tools that can be utilized by the Commission. For a list, please see Appendix A.

### *Visualization Techniques*

Where appropriate, visualization techniques will be employed throughout DVRPC's public participation



activities, to aid the public in understanding proposed plans. Examples of visualization techniques include sketches, drawings, artist renderings, physical models and maps, simulated photos, videos, computer modeled images, GIS based scenario planning tools, and computer simulation.

### *Notification of Public Comment Periods*

DVRPC will provide adequate time for public review of draft documents and staff recommendations prior to opportunities for public comment. The length of review and comment periods may vary depending on the nature of the plan or project but generally should be at least thirty (30) days. Major Commission actions are advertised as legal notices in a variety of regional newspapers, including a Spanish language newspaper.

### *Use of Public Comments*

All public input should be derived from as diverse a range of sources as possible. As appropriate and whenever possible, public comments should be used to revise work scopes, plans and programs.

DVRPC staff is responsible for responding to comments received during a public review period in a timely manner and/or for forwarding these comments to appropriate regional agencies for their response.

Comments submitted to DVRPC are considered part of the record. Summaries of comments received will be updated, made available to the public and forwarded to policy makers considering action. Public comments are reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate agency, and are also provided to the various DVRPC advisory committees including the Regional Transportation Committee (RTC), Regional Citizens Committee (RCC) and the DVRPC Board for consideration before final action of the Board.

If a final document, plan or TIP varies substantially from the one which was made available for public comment and review, an updated copy will be made available for public comment.

## Promoting Open and Accessible Involvement

Several additional laws affect the environment in which DVRPC plans—the Right-to-Know Law of 1957, the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, adopted in 1986, and the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, adopted in 1975.

- The Right-to-Know Law requires that every public record of a state agency or a division of a state agency, shall, at reasonable times, be open for examination and inspection by any citizen.
- The Sunshine Law outlines the right of the public to be present at meetings and to witness the deliberations of agencies vital to the enhancement of the democratic process. It further states that secrecy in public affairs undermines the faith of the public in government and the public's effectiveness in fulfilling its role. The New Jersey Public Meetings Act, adopted in 1975, also provides for open access and citizen accessibility to government.
- DVRPC and its legal counsel have determined that any pre-arranged meeting, which is participated in by a quorum of members and held for the purpose of deliberating agency business, shall be open to the public. However, exceptions to this rule include executive sessions involving employment; conferences in which the agency is authorized to participate but which do not include agency business; and working sessions held for the purpose of examining, analyzing and discussing various records, as long as official board action is not taken.
- DVRPC also gives reasonable notice of meetings and provides opportunities at each meeting for the public to comment on matters before the Board.





## Disclosure of Public Records Policy

See Appendix C.

## Use of DVRPC's Name and Identity

No individual, organization, committee or entity may use DVRPC's name and/or logo without the written consent of the DVRPC Executive Director. Any use deemed inappropriate or unauthorized will be reason for further action as deemed by DVRPC Counsel.

## Listing of Commonly Used Acronyms

Like many other state and federal agencies, DVRPC regularly employs acronyms to reference our many programs. Appendix B lists those most commonly used.

## For More Information

For additional information about DVRPC, the Regional Citizens Committee, to have your name added to our e-mail and mailing lists, or if you have any questions regarding public participation activities at the Commission, please contact the staff at the Office of Communications and Public Affairs:

Candace Snyder, Director, Office of  
Communications and Public Affairs

Jane Meconi, AICP, Manager of Public Involvement  
and Title VI Compliance

Elise Turner, Media Specialist



# APPENDIX A

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

**Advertisements** » Paid advertisements in newspapers and magazines that reach a broad public

**Newspaper Inserts** » A “fact sheet” within the local newspaper that provides community-wide distribution

**Feature Stories** » Focused stories on general project-related issues that can heighten the perceived importance of a project

**Media Release** » A concise review of the project/issue that is released to electronic and print media in the region; useful in announcing milestones

**News Conference** » An opportunity to reach the media in one setting that should be limited to newsworthy events

**Television** » Cable or network television programming that presents information and elicits a response

**Web Sites** » Links which contain project information, announcements and documents that are capable of reaching very large audiences at a low cost

**Briefings** » Utilization of existing meetings of civic or special interest organizations to inform and educate

**Newsletter** » A study, project, plan or program newsletter developed at the beginning, during and at the end of the work to inform and solicit input from stakeholders.

**Information Hot Line** » A separate line for public access to prerecorded project information or to reach project team members

**Simulation Games** » Exercises that simulate project decisions for effective education or training

**Information Centers** » Sites established to distribute information and respond to questions

**Field Trips** » Tours for stakeholders, elected officials, advisory group members and the media to develop rapport and build consensus

**Open Houses** » Facilities set aside to allow the public to tour and interact at its own pace; fosters one-on-one communications and builds credibility

**Community Fairs** » Central event with multiple activities to provide information and raise awareness

**Interviews** » One-on-one meetings with stakeholders to gain information about public concerns for refining public involvement

**Telephone Surveys / Polls** » Random sampling of population by telephone to gain specific information for statistical validation

**Response Sheets** » Mail-in forms to gain information on public preferences

**Internet Surveys** » Web-based response polls that often provide a higher response rate

**Public Hearings** » Formal meetings with scheduled presentations and with public comments recorded for legal purposes

**Public Meeting** » Informal gatherings with or without presentations that do not tape record proceedings

**Charrettes** » Intensive session where participants share in problem-solving, create partnerships or brainstorm on issues

**Community Facilitator** » A qualified individual to conduct public outreach and/or resolve issues

**Consensus Building Techniques** » Techniques that encourage compromise among different interests and provide structured and trackable decision-making

**In-Person Surveys** » Focus groups with standardized questionnaires or methodology

**Focus Group** » Message-testing forum with randomly selected members of a target audience to obtain input for planning decisions

**Advisory Committee** » A group of representative stakeholders assembled to provide public input

**Task Force** » A group of experts or stakeholders formed to develop a specific product or policy recommendation

**Panel** » A group assembled to debate or provide input on specific issues

**Workshop** » An informal public meeting that may include presentations and exhibits



# APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

<b>AADT</b> Average Annual Daily Traffic	<b>GMTF</b> Delaware Valley Goods Movement Task Force (of DVRPC)
<b>AASHTO</b> American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials	<b>GRH</b> Guaranteed Ride Home
<b>ADA</b> Americans with Disabilities Act	<b>HAZMAT</b> Hazardous Material
<b>ADT</b> Average Daily Traffic	<b>HCM</b> Highway Capacity Manual
<b>APA</b> American Planning Association	<b>HHW</b> Household Hazardous Waste
<b>APTA</b> American Public Transit Association	<b>HFCS</b> Highway Functional Classification System
<b>AQP</b> Air Quality Partnership	<b>HOV</b> High Occupancy Vehicle
<b>BCPC</b> Bucks County Planning Commission	<b>HPMS</b> Highway Performance Monitoring System
<b>CAAA</b> Clean Air Act Amendments	<b>IMS</b> Intermodal Management System
<b>CAM</b> Computer-Assisted Mapping	<b>IREG</b> Information Resources Exchange Group
<b>CBD</b> Central Business District	<b>ISTEA</b> Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (1991 Federal Funding)
<b>CCPC</b> Chester County Planning Commission	<b>ITE</b> Institute of Transportation Engineers
<b>CE</b> Categorical Exclusion (Environmental Clearance)	<b>ITS</b> Intelligent Transportation System
<b>CMAQ</b> Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (Federal Funding)	<b>IVHS</b> Intelligent Vehicle Highway System
<b>CMS</b> Congestion Management System	<b>LOS</b> Level of Service
<b>CMSA</b> Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area	<b>LRT</b> Light Rail Transit
<b>CO</b> Carbon Monoxide	<b>MAP</b> Mobility Alternatives Program
<b>CPI</b> Consumer Price Index	<b>MCPC</b> Montgomery County Planning Commission
<b>CTD</b> SEPTA City Transit Division	<b>MDDOT</b> Maryland Department of Transportation
<b>CY</b> Calendar Year	<b>MIS</b> Major Investment Study (No Longer Required)
<b>CZM</b> Coastal Zone Management	<b>MOU</b> Memorandum of Understanding
<b>DCPD</b> Delaware County Planning Department	<b>MPO</b> Metropolitan Planning Organization
<b>DelDOT</b> Delaware Department of Transportation	<b>MSA</b> Metropolitan Statistical Area
<b>DELEP</b> Delaware Estuary Program	<b>MUTCD</b> Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices
<b>DRBC</b> Delaware River Basin Commission	<b>NAAQS</b> National Ambient Air Quality Standards
<b>DRPA</b> Delaware River Port Authority	<b>NARC</b> National Association of Regional Councils
<b>DU</b> Dwelling Unit	<b>NEPA</b> National Environmental Policy Act
<b>DVRPC</b> Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission	<b>NHS</b> National Highway System
<b>EA</b> Environmental Assessment	<b>NJDEP</b> New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
<b>EDC</b> Economic Development Coalition	<b>NJDOT</b> New Jersey Department of Transportation
<b>EIS</b> Environmental Impact Study	<b>NJOSP</b> New Jersey Office of State Planning
<b>FAA</b> Federal Aviation Administration	<b>NJTRO</b> New Jersey Transit Rail Operations
<b>FFY</b> Federal Fiscal Year (October 1 to September 30)	<b>NJT</b> New Jersey Transit
<b>FHWA</b> Federal Highway Administration	<b>NOX</b> Oxides of Nitrogen
<b>FONSI</b> Finding of No Significant Impact (Environmental Clearance)	<b>NPS</b> National Park Service
<b>FTA</b> Federal Transit Administration	<b>NJS&amp;D</b> New Jersey Study & Development (TIP Process)
<b>FY</b> Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30)	<b>O<sub>3</sub></b> Ozone
<b>GIS</b> Geographic Information System	

**PADEP** Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

**PADCNR** Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

**PCC** Planning Coordinating Committee (of DVRPC)

**PCPC** Philadelphia City Planning Commission

**PE** Preliminary Engineering

**PEC** Pennsylvania Environmental Council

**PEL** Pennsylvania Economy League

**PEMA** Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency

**PENNDOT** Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (always uses "PennDOT")

**PIDC** Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation

**PATCO** Port Authority Transit Corporation

**PMC** Program Management Committee (PennDOT)

**PMS** Pavement Management System

**PMSA** Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area

**PPA** Pennsylvania Planning Association

**PRC** Pennsylvania Resource Council

**PRD** Program and Development

**PRM** Potomac-Raritan-Magothy Aquifer

**PTC** Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission

**PTR** Portable Traffic Recorder

**PUD** Planned Unit Development

**PUT** Pottstown Urban Transit

**PWP** Planning Work Program

**RAC** Regional Aviation Committee (of DVRPC)

**RAQC** Regional Air Quality Committee

**RASP** Regional Aviation Systems Plan

**RCC** Regional Citizens Committee (of DVRPC)

**RMS** Roadway Management System

**ROW** Right of Way

**RRD** Regional Rail Division (of SEPTA)

**RTC** Regional Transportation Committee (of DVRPC)

**SAFETEA-LU** Safe, Accountable, Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

**SAR** Share-A-Ride

**SASP** State Airport System Plan

**SCORP** State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

**S&D** Study & Development

**SDC** State Data Centers

**SDRP** State Development and Redevelopment

**SEPTA** Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority

**SIP** State Improvement Plan (for air quality)

**STIP** State Transportation Improvement Program

**SOV** Single Occupant Vehicle

**SRHPP** Supportive Regional Highway Planning (pass-through of highway funds to member)

**STD** Suburban Transit Division (SEPTA)

**STIP** State Transportation Improvement Program

**STP** Surface Transportation Program (highway)

**STU** STIP Funds Allocated to Urban Areas

**SWAC** Solid Waste Advisory Council

**TAQ** Transportation - Air Quality

**TAQP** Transportation Air Quality Planning

**TCM** Transportation Control Measures

**TCSP** Transportation Community Systems

**TDM** Transportation Demand Management

**TDR** Transfer of Development Rights

**TE** Transportation Enhancements

**TIP** Transportation Improvement Program

**TIS** Transportation Investment Study

**TMA** Transportation Management Association

**TMS** Traffic Monitoring System

**TRB** Transportation Research Board

**TSP** Transit Support Program (pass-through member governments and operating agencies)

**USDOT** United States Department of Transportation

**USEPA** United States Environmental Protection

**UWAG** Urban Waterfront Action Group

**VOC** Volatile Organic Compounds

**VMT** Vehicle Miles Traveled

**WILMAPCO** Wilmington (DE) Area Planning Council

**WQMP** Water Quality Management Plan



# APPENDIX C

DISCLOSURE OF PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY

**DVRPC Public Disclosure Policy**  
**Updated March 8, 2011 to include the New Jersey Government Records Council**  
**Notice: What to Do If Your Request For Record Has Been Denied**

**Introduction**

The State of New Jersey has enacted PL 2001 c. 404, an Open Public Records Act, as of January 8, 2002. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has enacted the Right-To-Know-Law, 65 P.S. §§ 67.101-67.3104. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission ("DVRPC") has adopted and prominently posted a policy for the release of "Public Records".

***DVRPC serves both Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and will treat all requests for disclosure of public records uniformly. However, nothing in the DVRPC Disclosure of Public Records Policy is intended to subject DVRPC to any statute or regulation which otherwise would not apply.***

For the purpose of this Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Public Records Policy:

A **public record** is defined as any record, including, but not limited to, financial documents, meeting minutes, contracts, studies, etc. created and maintained by DVRPC except: (a) Personnel records that would impair or impugn a person's reputation or personal security, (b) those records exempted or prohibited from release by other statutes of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the State of New Jersey, or by federal law, (c) those data, or data fields, that are an inextricable part of a larger record or database and cannot be reasonably extracted, and (d) those publications, maps and data - both hard copy and electronic - that may be purchased from DVRPC.

A **requester** is defined as an individual resident of the State of New Jersey, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or such other legal entity as may be entitled by law, or applicable court determination, to ask for public records from DVRPC.

**Procedure**

To request a public record from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, the requester must:

***Complete the attached Public Records Request Form and mail or fax it to:***

Candace Snyder  
Director, Office of Public Affairs and Communications  
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
The American College of Physicians Building - 8th Floor  
190 North Independence Mall West  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1520  
Tel: (215) 238-2875  
Fax: (215) 592-9125

**Copies of the request form are available on the DVRPC website or from the Director of Public Affairs.**

If the request is to be provided in a medium other than hard copy, the requester must specify such medium, including, in the case of electronic transmittal, the appropriate format. DVRPC will **endeavor** to comply with non-hard copy requests.

Upon receipt of a request, the Public Affairs Director will review the request for: (a) completeness, (b) the Commission's obligation to fill the request in accordance with the definition of a public record cited above and, (c) the ability to fulfill the request in the medium selected.

The Public Affairs Director will then recommend to the Executive Director that the request be fulfilled or denied.

If the request is to be fulfilled, the Public Affairs Director will notify the requester, in writing, by mail, by facsimile, or by email that the request is being fulfilled, and of any applicable fees as defined below, within five (5) business days of the receipt of the request. Such notification will also indicate an estimate of when the requested information will be available, except that the fulfillment date shall be no later than thirty (30) business days following the date of the notification.

If the Executive Director deems it appropriate to deny the request, the Public Affairs Director will notify the requester, in writing, by mail, by facsimile, or by email, that the request is being denied, along with the reason for denial, and the name, business address, business telephone number and signature of the person making the denial, within five (5) business days of the receipt of the request. Such notification of denial will also indicate the appeals procedure, as defined below, available to the requester.

### **Appeals Procedure**

Whenever a request for a DVRPC public record is denied, the requester may appeal that decision to the Board of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. To do so the requester must:

Address the appeal, in writing, by mail, or by facsimile, to the:

Chairman of the Board  
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
The American College of Physicians Building – 8th Floor  
190 North Independence Mall West, 8th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1520  
Fax (215) 592-9125

The appeal must include all information, including copies of the original request and all DVRPC responses, as well as any other information deemed appropriate for DVRPC Board review.

Upon receipt of an appeal to a denial issued under this policy, the appeal will be placed on the next available Board meeting agenda for review and action.

If the Board finds that the Executive Director correctly denied the request, a written explanation of the Board's affirmation of the denial will be provided to the requester.

If the finding of the Board is that the request should be fulfilled, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission will begin immediately to fulfill the request in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

Nothing in this appeals procedure shall deny, or abridge the requester's rights under the State of New Jersey Open Public Records Act, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Right-To-Know-Law or any other applicable statute. With respect to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, for example, the requester may file an appeal with the Office of Open Records (Commonwealth Keystone Building, 400 North Street, 4th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17120-0225) within 15 business days of the mailing date of DVRPC's response.

### **Fees**

For reproduction of existing hard copy information, DVRPC will charge a reproduction fee of \$ 0.10 per page for the first 50 pages and \$0.05 per page for each page thereafter.

Whenever fulfillment of the request will require the use of DVRPC personnel to complete, the requester will be provided an estimate of such cost in conjunction with notification that the request will be fulfilled.

If the cost estimate of fulfilling the request is less than \$100.00, the fee is due at the time the request is completed. Should the cost estimate of fulfilling the request exceed \$100.00, the fee must be paid before fulfillment is begun and the 30 business day time limit will begin upon receipt of the fee.

If the requester refuses to pay the applicable fee, the request will be deemed denied and subject to the applicable appeal procedures outlined above.

**Note: The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission will waive all fees that total Ten Dollars (\$10.00) or less.**

# New Jersey Government Records Council

## What To Do If Your Request for a Record Has Been Denied

The New Jersey Open Public Records Act (N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.) permits a person who believes he or she has been illegally denied access to a public record to file a complaint with the Government Records Council (GRC), or file suit in Superior Court to challenge the decision and compel disclosure. This poster describes the procedures for taking these actions.

### To file a complaint with the Government Records Council:

- Contact the GRC by phone at: **1-866-850-0511**, by e-mail at **[grc@dca.state.nj.us](mailto:grc@dca.state.nj.us)**, or review the GRC web site at **[www.nj.gov/grc](http://www.nj.gov/grc)** for information and to register your complaint.
- The GRC staff may be able to help resolve the problem over the phone. If not, you can receive a complaint form through the mail or from the web site.
- When you file the written complaint, the GRC will offer you and the public agency non-adversarial, impartial mediation.
- If mediation is not agreed to or fails, the GRC will investigate the complaint.
- The investigation may result in findings or a formal decision by the GRC, which may include a hearing by the Council.
- In some cases, the Council can award attorneys fees or fine a records custodian for failing to provide records.
- Details of this process are available from the GRC.
- There is no fee to file a complaint with the GRC.

### To file a complaint in Superior Court:

- A requester may start a summary (expedited) lawsuit in the Superior Court. A written complaint and order to show cause must be filed with the court.
- The court requires a \$200 filing fee, and you must serve the lawsuit papers on the appropriate public officials.
- The court will schedule a hearing and resolve the dispute.
- If you disagree with the court's decision, you may appeal the decision to the Appellate Division of Superior Court.
- If you are successful, you may be entitled to reasonable attorney fees.
- You may wish to consult with an attorney to learn about initiating and pursuing a summary lawsuit in the Superior Court.



For more information, contact the **Government Records Council** toll-free at 866-850-0511 or **[grc@dca.state.nj.us](mailto:grc@dca.state.nj.us)**,

PO Box 819, Trenton, New Jersey, 08625-0819





# Request For Public Records Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Requestor: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (day): \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

All information requested will be provided in accordance with the terms and conditions of the DVRPC Disclosure of Public Records Policy.

## Information Requested

Copies of Minutes (Please specify committee, date, topic, or other identifying information)

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Maps, Plans, Studies (Please specify date, topic, or other identifying information)

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Other (Please specify date, topic, or other identifying information)

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Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Response Provided: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized DVRPC Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

## A Strategy for Citizen Involvement

**Publication No.:** 07047

**Date Published:** March, 2008

**Geographic Area Covered:** Nine-County Delaware Valley region, comprised of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties in Pennsylvania, and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer counties in New Jersey.

**Key Words:** federal mandates, long-range plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), committee management, public participation, DVRPC philosophy, public involvement goals and objectives, procedures, planners methodology, public comment periods and public meetings, visualization, environmental equity, Title VI, environmental justice (EJ), SAFETEA-LU, Clean Air Act Amendments, Americans with Disabilities Act, public disclosure, acronyms.

**Abstract:** DVRPC has a long history of public involvement in its plans and programs, beginning in the 1970s when federal mandates outlined the basics of citizen involvement. In 2001, the DVRPC Board adopted a Public Participation Plan, which was designed for DVRPC's Board, staff and the general public as an outline of the Commission's overall strategy for public participation; it also included the policies that were adopted as inherent to the operation of this agency into the twenty-first century. Updated in 2004, the Public Participation Plan included a public disclosure policy and an Environmental Justice Protocol.

It is now time to examine and reissue the Public Participation Plan, to ensure its compliance with current federal transportation legislation, specifically the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This also provides an excellent opportunity for the Commission to reaffirm its commitment to a transparent, open and inclusive planning process.

**Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission**  
**190 North Independence Mall West**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19106-1520**

**Phone:** 215-592-1800  
**Fax:** 215-592-9125  
**Internet:** [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)

**Staff contact:** Jane Meconi, AICP, Manager, Public Involvement and Title VI Compliance  
**Direct phone:** 215-238-2871  
**E-mail:** [jmeconi@dvrpc.org](mailto:jmeconi@dvrpc.org)



**Delaware Valley  
Regional Planning  
Commission**

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